

fickleness, and yet he was not with Hutten and Sickingen in their appeal to the sword. His vehemence spent itself in words, and, though his words were furious enough at times, it was, if possible, with words, not with blows, that he would win his cause. He had indeed some thought, in his impulsive or despondent moments, of meeting force with force, but he hesitated to commit himself to the problematic schemes of his impetuous allies, and finally rebutted Hutten's suggestion to make use of carnal weapons. The Bible was his armoury in the fight with error and abuse. "You see what Hutten wants," we find him writing to Spalatin in January 1521 ; "I do not wish that we should fight for the gospel with fire and sword. I have written to the man to this effect. By the Word the world has been subdued; by the Word the Church has been upheld ; and by the Word it will be reformed, and even Antichrist, as he has not used violence, will be overpowered without violence by the Word." He was not quite prophetic in this forecast. In the long-run the question of reform became in Germany, as in other lands, a question of who could strike the hardest blows, and in this respect Hutten had a keener vision than the great preacher of the Word at Wittenberg. Nor does he seem quite consistent, for in his angry moods his language is still very bellicose. He threatens his persecutors not only with God's vengeance, but with "an uprising which shall sweep them from the earth." He thinks, moreover, that they will deserve what they get, and he proclaims that "all who give body, goods, honour, that the rule of the bishops may be destroyed," are "God's dear children, and true Christians who obey God's command and fight against the devil's order" ("Against the Falsely called Spiritual Order of the Pope and the Bishops," July 1522).

Such utterances are compromising, and some have seen in them a preparation for the Sickingen rising. We must, however, judge Luther's standpoint, not from an occasional irascible outburst, but from his deliberate teaching on the right of insurrection. The man who at times could use the most inflaming revolutionary language, and defy the whole world for the sake of his opinions, was by nature and principle the staunch supporter of constituted authority. In another effusion which appeared in the same year (1522)," A True Ex-